

## LOANWORDS IN DEHU PRE-1920

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Dehu is a "Melanesian" language spoken by some 7,000 people on the island of Lifou, the central island of the Loyalty Group, situated approximately seventy miles to the east of New Caledonia.

Lifou is administered by France, although French linguistic influence was not great there until after the 1920s, when the English missionaries withdrew. The Loyalties have never been under English rule.

The sources of the loanwords, in roughly chronological order, are as follows:

- (1) English Sandalwood traders and whalers.
- (2) Polynesian mission teachers.
- (3) English Protestant missionaries.
- (4) Borrowings from existing Polynesian Bibles of the London Mission Society.
- (5) Roman Catholic French missionaries.

### 1. EARLY CONTACTS

The Loyalty Islands were discovered in 1793 by Captain Raven, master of the store-ship *Britannia* on a voyage from Sydney to Batavia. In 1827 Dumont d'Urville charted the eastern shores of the islands, and in 1840 the western coast. Neither of these men made contact with the indigenous population. When the first catechist, Pao, arrived on Lifou in 1842, he found that sandalwooders had already been trading there. No loanwords can be attributed to them with any degree of certainty.

Three early German borrowings have been encountered, namely, *bona*, *bean*; *beisin*, *broom*, and *beka*, *oven*. As there is no record of German residents in the Loyalty Islands, one would incline to the view that they may have been brought perhaps by later Polynesian teachers, as the German traders, Godeffroy and Son, are known to have operated

out of Apia, the training centre for the catechists, in the 1850s. They could also have come from Lifou sailors, much prized as ship's crew later in the century.

## 2. POLYNESIAN BORROWINGS

In 1842, the Rarotongan catechist, Pao, landed on Lifou. However, the Polynesian borrowings in Dehu come from Samoan, since Samoa was the training centre for catechists from which Pao came. The loanwords underwent little or no phonological change, so a comparison with the Dehu phoneme inventory is unnecessary at this point. Samoan borrowings, as opposed to the Biblical borrowings from Greek and Hebrew through Samoan, discussed in section four, are as follows:

<i>sheep</i>	mamoe	<	Sm	mamoe
<i>table</i>	laulau	<	Sm	laulau
<i>iron</i>	fao	<	Sm	fao
<i>crowbar</i>	samala	<	Sm	sāmala ( <i>hammer</i> )
<i>plane</i>	olo	<	Sm	olo
<i>saw</i>	gili	<	Sm	'ili
<i>book</i>	tusi	<	Sm	tusi
<i>letter of alphabet</i>	mataitus	<	Sm	mata'itusi
<i>to greet</i>	italofa	<	Sm	talofa

## 3. ENGLISH PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES

English Protestant missionaries arrived on Lifou in 1852 and 1857; English is the source of the great majority of the three hundred observed borrowings. The English Protestants met with great success, and MacFarlane claims that 6,000 of the 7,000 Lifuans were members of his Church. This would account for the almost negligible borrowing from French in the period under consideration. Some of the English loanwords attributed to the missionaries could well have come from the English traders as well.

Before discussing the English borrowings and the resultant phonological and sometimes semantic changes, a brief phonological statement of Dehu is called for. The phonemes of Dehu are as follows:

p			t	ɬ		k
			d	ɖ		g
	f	θ	s		ʃ	x
		ð	z			h
			ʃ			
			l			
ŋ			ŋ		ŋ̃	ŋ̣
m			n		ñ	ŋ
w̃						
w						
				i		u
				e	ø	o
				æ		a + length

Phonemes occurring only in loanwords are: /b, v, ʒ, ʝ/.

The syllable in Dehu is significant as a unit only for the prediction of stress. The syllabic nucleus is always V.

In Dehu, the CVCV pattern occurs most frequently. No clusters of CC may occur, and VV is less common in Dehu than, for example, in Iai.

Phonemes /x, h/ and the series of voiceless resonants rarely occur word finally and never occur utterance finally.

Correspondences between English and Dehu consonants are as follows:

ENGLISH	DEHU <sup>1</sup>		
	INITIAL	MEDIAL	FINAL
p	p, b	p	p
t	ɬ	t, ɬ	ɬ
k	k	k	k
b	b	b	
d	ɖ, d	d	
g	g	g, k	
ʃ	ʃ	ʃ	ʃ
ʝ	ʝ	ʃ	ʃ
f	f	f	f

θ	θ	θ	θ
s	s	s	s
h	h		
v	v	v	f
ʒ	ʒ		s
z		z	z
m	m	m	
n	n	n	n
ŋ			
r	r	l	l
w	w	w	
l	l	l	l

## EXAMPLES

p : p, b	pepa, <i>paper</i> ; sup, <i>soup</i> ; kap, <i>cup</i> ; bus, <i>cat</i>
t : t, ṭ	tri, <sup>2</sup> <i>tea</i> ; batra, <i>butter</i> ; dokete, <i>doctor</i> ; but, <i>shoe</i>
k : k	kau, <i>cow</i> ; drak, <i>duck</i> ; ki, <i>key</i>
b : b	bi, <i>bee</i> ; bot, <i>boat</i>
d : ḍ, d	drak, <i>duck</i> ; droli, <i>doll</i> ; dië, <i>deer</i> ; dilën, <i>to deal</i>
g : g, k	gus, <i>goose</i> ; galas, <i>glass</i> ; gilis, <i>grease</i> ; goot, <i>goat</i> ; suka, <i>sugar</i>
ʒ : ʒ	cea, <i>chair</i> ; mac, <i>match</i> ; wac, <i>watch</i>
ʝ : ʝ, ʒ	jam, <i>jam</i> ; jacket, <i>jacket</i> ; soca, <i>soldier</i>
f : f	fiva, <i>fever</i> ; fait, <i>fist</i> ; fael, <i>file</i> ; haf, <i>half</i>
θ : θ	theri, <i>three</i> ; sabath, <i>Sabbath</i>
s : s	sadel, <i>saddle</i> ; sela, <i>sailor</i> ; wesel, <i>whistle</i> ; leis, <i>lace</i>

h : h	hos, <i>horse</i> ; hama, <i>hammer</i> ; haf, <i>half</i>
v : v, f	fiva, <i>fever</i> ; sileva, <i>silver</i> ; tuelof, <i>twelve</i>
ʒ : ʒ, s	shit, <i>sheet</i> ; was, <i>wash</i> ; fenes, <i>finish</i> ; dis, <i>dish</i>
z : z	aluzin, <i>to cause to lose</i> ; luz, <i>lost</i>
m : m	menet, <i>minute</i> ; mac, <i>match</i> ; lemen, <i>lemon</i> ; hama, <i>hammer</i>
n : n	nani, <i>goat</i> ; menet, <i>minute</i> ; numera, <i>number</i> ; lemen, <i>lemon</i>
ŋ	Always borrowed in a consonant cluster, see below
r : r, l	rouz, <i>rose</i> ; gilis, <i>grease</i>
w : w	wael, <i>wild</i> ; wep, <i>whip</i> ; hawa, <i>hour</i> ; wesel, <i>whistle</i>
l : l	lemen, <i>lemon</i> ; wela, <i>whale</i> .

It would appear that foreign consonants were much more easily borrowed in initial position than elsewhere, where they are made to conform to the existing Dehu phonemic system.

Consonant clustering is avoided in Dehu, and also in loanwords containing consonant clusters, be these within the syllable or intersyllabic, as follows:

(a) Within the syllable:

pl > pel	peleit, <i>plate</i>
ks > kis	sikis, <i>six</i>
bl > bal	balaiket, <i>blanket</i>
gr > gil	gilis, <i>grease</i>
gl > gal	galas, <i>glass</i>
fl > fal	falawa, <i>bread</i> (possibly from Samoan)
θr > θer	theri, <i>three</i>
sp > sip	sipun, <i>spoon</i> ; sipö, <i>spur</i>
st > sit	sitima, <i>steamer</i> ; kasitroel, <i>castor-oil</i>
mp > m	lam, <i>lamp</i>
nt > n, t	talan, <i>talent</i> ; peit, <i>paint</i>
ŋk > aik	balaiket, <i>blanket</i> ; faraig, <i>franc</i>
ld > l	wael, <i>wild</i> ; gol, <i>gold</i>
lk > lek	selek, <i>silk</i> ; melek, <i>milk</i>
lv > lof	tuelof, <i>twelve</i>

## (b) Intersyllabic:

kt	>	ket	dokete, <i>doctor</i>
ft	>	fit	fifitin, <i>fifteen</i>
st	>	sit	sikisitin, <i>sixteen</i>
lv	>	lev	sileva, <i>silver</i>
lj	>	č	soca, <i>soldier</i>

With consonant clusters, CC > CVC. The V tends to harmonise with either the preceding or following V, except that sC > siC, regardless of surrounding vowels. Most noticeably in final position, homorganic clusters tend to lose either the first or the second element, while non-homorganic clusters tend to observe the CC > CVC pattern observed above.

Vowel correspondences are as follows:

i	:	i	bi, <i>bee</i> ; wil, <i>wheel</i> ; wik, <i>week</i> ; shit, <i>sheet</i>
I	:	e	wep, <i>whip</i> ; menet, <i>minute</i> ; fenes, <i>finish</i> ; melek, <i>milk</i>
e	:	e	lemen, <i>lemon</i> ; sadel, <i>saddle</i>
æ	:	a	mac, <i>match</i> ; nani, <i>nanny-goat</i> ; hama, <i>hammer</i> ; sadel, <i>saddle</i>
a	:	a	haf, <i>half</i> ; galas, <i>glass</i> ; was, <i>wash</i> <sup>3</sup>
ø	:	æ, a, e	dië, <i>deer</i> ; dalë, <i>dollar</i> ; fiva, <i>fever</i> ; kona, <i>corner</i> ; dokete, <i>doctor</i>
o	:	o	gol, <i>gold</i> ; ikot, <i>coat</i> ; soop, <i>soap</i>
ɔ	:	o	hos, <i>horse</i> ; droli, <i>doll</i> ; kona, <i>corner</i>
u	:	u	bus, <i>cat</i> ; suka, <i>sugar</i> ; luz, <i>last</i> ; sup, <i>soup</i>

Few English words containing diphthongs have been observed among the borrowings. In each case, the complex nuclei have become two simple nuclei or a single vowel, as follows:

ai	>	ae, ai	saen, <i>sign</i> ; daeman, <i>diamond</i> ; wael, <i>wild</i> ; fael, <i>file</i> ; fait, <i>fist</i>
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au > au	kau, <i>cow</i> ; trauziz, <i>trousers</i>
ei > ei, e	leis, <i>lace</i> ; seif, <i>safe</i> ; leize, <i>lazy</i> ; sela, <i>sailor</i> ; wela, <i>whale</i>
oi > oe	boelën, <i>to boil</i> ; kasitroel, <i>castor-oil</i>
ou > u, ou	bot, <i>boat</i> ; rouz, <i>rose</i> .

Before discussing the special loanwords which appeared with the translation of the Bible into Dehu (1890), it is interesting to observe how Dehu formatives have been employed with the English borrowings.

(a) The transitive formatives, -ën ~ -in, are added thus:

wep ( <i>whip</i> )	> wepën <i>to whip s.th.</i>
wil ( <i>wheel</i> )	> wilën <i>to run over s.th.</i>
dil ( <i>deal</i> )	> dilen <i>to deal (cards)</i>
saen ( <i>sign</i> )	> saenën <i>to sign s.th.</i>
salem ( <i>sale</i> )	> salemënto <i>sell s.th.</i>
fael ( <i>file</i> )	> falën <i>to file s.th.</i>
boel ( <i>boil</i> )	> boelënto <i>to boil s.th.</i>
gilis ( <i>grease</i> )	> gilisin <i>to grease s.th.</i>
ki ( <i>key</i> )	> kin <i>to lock s.th.</i>
soop ( <i>soap</i> )	> soopën <i>to soap s.th.</i>
sup ( <i>soup</i> )	> supin <i>to make soup</i>
fait ( <i>first</i> )	> faitën <i>to fight</i>

(b) The causative formatives, a-X-n, give the following:

luz ( <i>lost</i> )	> aluzin <i>to cause to lose</i>
kalabus ( <i>prison</i> )	> akalabusin <i>to imprison</i>
puafala ( <i>poor man</i> )	> apuafalan <i>to impoverish</i>

(c) The collective prefix i- is found with some borrowed nouns, thus:

but ( <i>boat, shoe</i> )	> ibut <i>shoes</i>
trauziz ( <i>trousers</i> )	> itrauziz <i>trousers</i>

#### 4. THE BIBLE

The Bible was translated into Dehu in 1890 by members of the London Mission Society. This naturally involved the use of borrowings and neologisms. However, from checking the Samoan and Rarotongan Bibles, it appears that the great majority of the borrowings were taken *in toto* from existing London Mission Society theological literature

and Bible translations. In some cases, the "Polynesian" borrowing has been altered to suit the phonemic system of Dehu.

#### EXAMPLES

*demon* : demoni D. < temoni Sm. < δαίμων Gk.  
*devil* : diablo D. < tiapolo Sm. < διαβολος Gk.  
*lute* : nabeli D. < napeli Sm. < nebel Heb.  
*crow* : oreba D. < oreva Sm. < oreb Heb.

More often, the borrowing was made direct from "Samoan", without any attempt at regularisation. This is especially noticeable in "Samoan" words containing /r/. In fact, no attempt at regularisation was made in Samoan either, as the original Samoan language does not have /r/.

#### EXAMPLES

*oak* : alona D. < aluna Sm. < allon Heb.  
*cedar* : arasi D. < arasi Sm. < erez Heb.  
*bread* : areto D. < areto Sm. < ἄρτος Gk.  
*wolf* : luko D. < luko Sm. < λύκος Gk.  
*frog* : rana D. < rane Sm. < rana L.

Apart from the absence of /r/ in Dehu, the ending of every word with a vowel is quite alien to the Dehu language.

In a few instances, the translator rejected the "Samoan" word and substituted one of his own invention. For example, where the "Samoan" has *olive*, *olive*, the translator into Dehu used *elaio*, from the Greek ἔλαιος; for "Samoan" *epikopo*, *bishop*, from Greek ἐπίσκοπος, he substituted *pisop*, from English. The most interesting invention of the translator is *cako*, from *jacko*, a common nineteenth century English word for *monkey*, recorded by Webster as having entered English from the French *jocko*, which is claimed to have its origin in Efik, Gaboon *id<sup>3</sup>io<sup>k</sup>*<sup>1</sup>, *chimpanzee*.

The "borrowings" referred to in this section can hardly be called borrowings, as they have never been employed in conversation and are never heard outside a religious service. Indeed, many of the Bible "borrowings" are no longer understood by a large proportion of the population.

#### 5. ROMAN CATHOLIC FRENCH MISSIONARIES

The Roman Catholic French missionaries met with little success, and even nowadays their followers form a small minority group. The French administration did not allow French migrants to settle in the



Loyalty Group; so the main external linguistic influence until 1920, the year when the Protestant Mission was handed over to the French, was that of English. No certain French borrowings into Dehu have been found for the pre-1920 period, although with improving communications and transport facilities in the 1950s and 60s, the influence of the French language has become considerable and would require a separate study.

In conclusion, it should be observed that the early English borrowings are still in current use, and have not, with the exception of the numerals, been superseded by their French equivalents, although French is now the language of education and commerce throughout the Loyalty Group.

## N O T E S

1. Blank spaces in the table indicate that a phoneme correspondence has not been found in that position.
2. In Dehu orthography, tr = ʈ, dr = ɖ, ë = æ, ö = ø.
3. This correspondence, together with that of æ, would suggest that several English speakers in the area came from the north of England.

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